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mysticism, by feeling ; but if we try to shape our feelings into syllogisms, and call upon reason to assist us, we get a dangerous ally. Reasoning in such matters is like the sword in quarrels : " They that take the sword shall perish by it." Religion is of " such an unspeakable comfort " in the cares and misery of this world, that to overthrow any form of it, even fetichism, unless you have something better to put in its place, is a sin against one's fellow-men. It cannot be denied that Bayle has written much that renders him liable to this reproach. But his motives may have been good ; he may have sincerely possessed the faith he extols. Who shall say ? Leibnitz, who had often crossed swords with him, wrote after his death : " It is to be hoped that M. Bayle now finds himself surrounded by those lights that are wanting to us here below, since there is ground for supposing that he was not deficient in good intentions." " Charité bien rare parmi les théologiens," was Fontenelle's remark on this.

F. SHELDON.

ART. VII. — FRANCE UNDER THE SECOND EMPIRE.

THE connexion between the First and the Second Empire is almost too obvious to need insisting upon. That the latter is built upon so much of the massive ruins of the former as had resisted disintegration, and still peered above the *débris* of intermediate dynasties, is an admitted fact needing no demonstration. The important question is, Of what materials do these imperial foundations exist ? What, to drop metaphor, are the ideas or sentiments, created by the First Empire, which have outlived it ?

Now, when we endeavor to seize at a glance the most prominent characteristic of the Napoleonic era, the impression first presenting itself is that of French *supremacy*, — above all, of French *military supremacy*. There can be no hesitation here. It is by this characteristic that that epoch of French history is pre-eminently distinguished from every other.

Closely connected with this idea of supremacy, although less

conspicuously prominent, stands the idea of *authority*, of a firm central power repressing anarchy and curbing revolution. These two we take to be the main characteristics of the Napoleonic era, the characteristics which left on that generation an impress so deep as to prove hereditary, and thus prepared the way for the Second Empire and its marvels.

The persistency of the characteristics of race is one of the most curious of ethnological problems. In the extant fragments of Cato the Elder's "*Origines*," the following passage occurs: "*Pleraque Gallia duas res industriosissime persequitur; rem militarem et argute loqui.*"* The remark is two thousand years old, but remains strictly true at the present day. To the Frenchman, vain at all points, but especially vain where *la gloire* is concerned, the idea of France's military supremacy possesses an attractiveness without some appreciation of the intensity of which the course of recent French history cannot possibly be understood. The apparent eclipse of this idea was one main cause of the instability of Louis Philippe's throne, and its brilliant "*emersion*," before the magic of Napoleon's name, helped more than anything else to lift the present Emperor into power.

Now it is tolerably apparent that race characteristics will always be most powerful among the least educated classes. In France the peasantry—the most purely Gallic portion of the population—are in a state of ignorance only exceeded, probably, by that of the same class in England. What little knowledge they possess is, of course, only school-gained knowledge, neither developed nor assimilated by the processes of observation and discussion which are open to the artisan of the town, and hence rather fitted to enhance than to correct the common rustic tendency to superstition, which in the imaginative Celt is especially strong.

But the French peasant, from the circumstance of his being the owner of the soil he tills, is also intensely conservative in character, opposed heart and soul to every revolutionary tendency, and therefore deeply enamored of that principle of authority which we have named as one of the dominant elements of the Napoleonic idea. For him the first Emperor,

* See Krause, *Historicorum Romanorum Fragmenta*. Berlin, 1833.

whose picture hangs above his hearth, is France's tutelary saint, the personification of that national grandeur which enables him to believe that, humble as he is, the mere fact of his being *un Français* raises him above the denizens of every other country in the world. The simple intensity of this hero-worship is almost incomprehensible to an American. To find its parallel we must open some legendary chronicles and go back to the days of King Arthur and his Round Table, or of Charlemagne and his paladins. That the Emperor did not really die in St. Helena, but remained; in some semi-spiritualized condition, a denizen of this nether world, was for years the firm faith of thousands of these poor fellows, many of whom at once accepted the conclusion that Louis Napoleon was *le petit caporal* himself restored to animation. The melodramatic travesty of a Republic which followed the revolution of 1848, making universal suffrage logically imperative, threw the elective power directly into the hands of these Napoleon-worshippers, and the watchful Louis saw his advantage and profited by it at once.* For a second time, popular sovereignty, unenlightened by education, engendered pure absolutism.

The vote of 1851, however, was swollen almost to unanimity by the adhesion of many who were far from sharing the hero-worship of the rural masses. It was solely as the representative of the principle of authority that the *bourgeoisie* voted for Louis Napoleon. He was in their eyes the alternative of a socialistic republic, but their hearty acceptance of a *régime* which annihilated their own political influence was naturally impossible. The Emperor himself was perfectly aware of this. He knew that by the majority of the enlightened classes the Napoleonic era was regarded with very different sentiments from those entertained by the rural population, and accordingly one of his main objects always was to "put down" the enlightened classes and to give preponderance to the unenlightened.

* It will be remembered that a law restricting universal suffrage, passed by the republican Assembly in 1850, in known opposition to the President's views, was one of the incidents which helped to prepare public opinion for the *coup d'état*. The repeal of this law was announced in the proclamation posted about Paris on the morning after that famous — or infamous — act.

This assertion seems at first sight almost an incredible one, when we remember that France is not only one of the most enlightened countries of the civilized world, but emphatically the one which boasts loudest of her enlightenment. Its relevancy to our subject is, however, sufficiently close to demand some proof of its accuracy. It is, indeed, one of the leading facts which explain the utter hollowness of that structure which has already collapsed, and apparently could not but collapse, before the first well-directed blow.

The France of which Louis Napoleon possessed himself, with "well-used cruelty,"* in 1851, was a nation full of noble aspirations, but, thanks to a chronic state of revolution, so utterly bereft of any sort of national faith, whether in religion, morals, or politics, that these aspirations were without harmony or precision of aim. The various sections of society, — the *noblesse*, the *bourgeoisie*, the operatives, and the *prolétaires*, — forging for themselves, out of their own special and exclusive interests, theories inconsistent with the interests of others, and acknowledging no other authority than the conviction of the moment, had come at once into inevitable collision, and the belief in the Republic which was to inaugurate a millennium of peace, liberty, and brotherhood, had vanished almost at the moment of that Republic's proclamation. The state of things was one which justified, or rather demanded, strong repressive measures, and of this the great majority of the people were deeply conscious, as the vote of the 20th December, — the vote of seven and a half millions, — strikingly proved. But had Louis Napoleon possessed range as well as clearness of vision, he would have felt that, with a nation whose entire political life, for three quarters of a century, had been a feverish striving after liberty, such a state of things could only be exceptional. Unable to perceive this, he accepted the temporary as the normal condition of France, and set himself to make perpetual a dictatorship which was only justified by transient circumstances.

By restoring, after the *coup d'état*, that universal suffrage

* "Bene usate si possono chiamar quelle crudeltà che si fanno una sol volta per necessità dell'assicurarsi." — MACHIAVELLI, *Il Principe*, Ch. VIII. (Di quelli che per scelleratezze sono pervenuti al principato.)

which the sham Republic had sought to restrict, the Emperor found at once a solid basis for his power in the Napoleon-worshipping peasantry.* But the middle class and the operatives, meantime, were alike opposed to the absolute *régime* which he inaugurated, and his efforts to repress this opposition constitute almost the entire internal history of the Second Empire. The parliamentary traditions of the Restoration and of Louis Philippe were too deeply engrained to be altogether ignored. Some empty names were, however, all that Louis Napoleon deemed it necessary to concede to these traditions. A senate, with no share in legislation, except to determine the constitutionality of the laws submitted to it by the Emperor, and a "legislative body" empowered to vote upon, but neither to reject nor to amend these laws, both sitting with closed doors, were the institutions substituted for the free "tribune" which had echoed to the incisive logic of a Guizot, the fiery utterances of a Thiers, and the burning declamations of a Lamartine.

This was, practically, to convert the legislature into a mere court of record. But the Frenchman is no less prone to the *argute loqui* than to the *rem militarem*; and, in spite of the withdrawal of every stimulus to oratorical display, there was still danger that the court of record might become a debating society also. To prevent this the most strenuous efforts were made to exclude every element of opposition, without which there is no debate. "Official candidates" were put forward, backed by ministerial circulars, and openly supported by the whole force of a bureaucracy which ramifies from Paris through out France, and obeys with mechanical precision the impulse given from the centre. To the average Frenchman, nurtured under this system of minute centralization, nothing is more irksome than political responsibility, and the authoritative recommendations of the government were adopted by the masses with eager subserviency. As a result, the "liberal" intellect of France was virtually excluded from the first Corps Législatif, and was only represented in the second (that of 1857),

* According to the French census of 1866, out of an entire population of thirty-eight millions, twenty-six and a half millions inhabit country districts exclusively.

by five members (Jules Favre, Picard, Darimon, Henon, and — Ollivier).

Having thus, as he fondly believed, silenced the tribune, the Emperor turned to the press, — a still more formidable opponent, because penetrating into every household and knowing no fatigue. The decree of February, 1853, subjected all newspapers to a preliminary authorization, and to the deposit of a large sum by way of "caution money." The circulation of matter considered objectionable, by an irresponsible minister, entailed an official warning (*avertissement*), and after three such warnings the paper might, at the option of the same minister, be suspended. In some cases this supervision of the press took the preventive form, the minister formally interdicting the bare mention of certain facts the publicity of which might seem to him undesirable! Two judicial condemnations, for *contraventions* or *délits*, authorized entire suppression of the offending journal.

So much for the newspaper press. To get at literature in its more solid form was not so easy, and in the heart of Paris a *direct** interference with this was scarcely to be thought of, even by the elect of eight millions. As far, however, as the rural population — the Emperor's special object of anxiety — were concerned, the thing presented no difficulty whatever. The village book-trade in France is carried on through the medium of licensed hawkers (*colporteurs*); and, under the pretext of religious and moral supervision; these men were now compelled to submit every separate book in their stock to be stamped in the bureau of the Minister of the Interior. Of course the refusal of this stamp to any work amounts to the absolute interdiction of its sale among the peasantry.

In France no grade of education is exempt from government control. Upon education, therefore, it was easy enough, mechanically speaking, to lay a cramping hand. The only real difficulty was to do this without shocking public opinion too much. But in Church-and-State Europe there is always a ready way to turn such a difficulty. Throw education into the hands of the priesthood, and its increase loses at once all identity with the

* It is indirectly interfered with, however, even in Paris, by the decree requiring both booksellers and printers to take out a government license.

increase of "enlightenment." Of course it is the "private" schools which are furthest removed from government influence; but as these, like the public schools, require an official authorization which is revocable at pleasure, it was easy to suppress them here and there, on one pretext or another, and into the vacancy so formed the wealthy and energetic ultramontane confraternity, called the "Frères de la Doctrine Chrétienne," almost invariably steps in.

This confraternity only occupies itself with primary education. In the higher grade the clerical competitors are, of course, the Jesuits. To check the progress of these champions of obscurantism the government of Louis Philippe had wisely ruled that the degree of *Bachelier-ès-lettres* should be conferred only on youths prepared in colleges open to government inspection. The repeal of this regulation admitted the Jesuits at once, with their superior wealth, their concentrated action, and their imposing stock of arid erudition, to compete with the liberal public establishments, which could not meet them on equal terms, and since that repeal Jesuit colleges have been multiplying in every direction. Thanks to arrangements of this kind, the Emperor was enabled to make yearly boasts of the spread of education in France, with the comfortable conviction, the while, that the solidity of his throne had not thereby been impaired.

But these provisions were aimed mainly at the middle class, whose constitutional and liberal tendencies they were meant to cripple and silence. The laboring classes of the large towns, — men nurtured amid revolutionary traditions and pervaded by theories of the wildest and often the most desperate character, — required a different treatment. Material well-being was the Emperor's grand panacea for this source of disturbance. Constant employment and good wages would keep the irritations of poverty away from the workingman's door; cheap amusements — concerts, hippodromes, and open-air dances — would indispose him for political intrigue or discussion, and beautiful boulevards and public gardens, adorned with statues, fountains, flowers, and trees, would invite him to healthy exercise, keep his liver in order, and satisfy the feeling for sensuous beauty, for elegance, brightness, and gayety, which is a characteristic

of the race. Accordingly, public works were inaugurated throughout France, but more particularly in the metropolis, on a scale of lavish magnificence to which modern history at least affords no parallel. In this way Paris has become incomparably the most beautiful city of Europe; and as Paris is, for the Frenchman, the representative of France, gratified popular vanity has closed its eyes to the loss suffered by the popular purse.* But in running magnificent boulevards and stately avenues through his capital in every direction, Louis Napoleon did something more than gratify popular vanity and provide work for turbulent operatives. He has at the same time immensely facilitated military action against revolutionary *émeutes*; he has broken up and obliterated numerous hot-beds of disturbance, and has, by the rise of rents inevitable upon his improvements, driven the "dangerous classes" from their objectionable lodgement in the interior of the town into the cheaper suburbs.

With direct economical action in the workingman's favor, rents under two hundred and fifty francs are exempted, in Paris, from taxation; the "boucherie" has been wisely thrown open to competition, and the "boulangerie" has been — not wisely — subjected to a maximum price, with compensation from the municipal revenues. As for repressive legislation, the stringent laws on the press affect of course the poor man's newspaper as much, at least, as the rich man's, and the law restricting "meetings" to less than twenty persons, unless officially authorized, — a law passed by the sham Republic of 1848, — renders the organization of the perilous "club" impossible.

The political status we have above described was that immediately created by the *coup d'état*. It directly supports, we think, our statement that the Emperor's leading policy has been to make of the *bourgeoisie* and operatives political ciphers,†

* The total outlay on public works in Paris alone for the ten years ending with 1862 has been estimated at \$90,000,000. The cost of adding six metres to the height of a single wing of the Louvre was \$800,000. The erection of the Boulevard de Sebastopol, which broke up some of the worst districts of the city, cost \$15,000,000.

† "The position of the legislature," boldly exclaimed M. de Flavigny in the session of 1853, "is simply degrading, and we senators are mere ciphers."

and to rest his own absolute power entirely on the rural population; that is to say, on that portion of the people which is notoriously the least educated and, above all, the least awakened to political self-consciousness.* His whole system of government has been modelled on this policy, and the real merit of that system has been, that an essentially low and selfish aim — purely and simply that of establishing his own dynasty — has been prosecuted with so much of worldly wisdom that the appearance of a close harmony with the enlightened tendencies of the age has been consistently kept up almost from beginning to end. As far as the material prosperity and political influence which make a show in the world are concerned, Louis Napoleon secured for France that commanding position which is so infinitely dear to the national vanity. What “domestic happiness” he brought her is another question, which we shall now examine.

One test of a good government is, unquestionably, its harmony with the stage of development at which the governed nation has arrived, — its fitness to discern and satisfy the requirements of that stage. In this sense, England and Russia, for example, are both well-governed countries, although their political systems are strikingly dissimilar, and would, if interchanged, probably deserve to be considered the two worst-constructed governments in the world. Tried by this test, the Second Empire must be condemned at once. The characteristic movement of European civilization, during the last century, has been towards limited monarchy and representative institutions; and the country which inaugurated that movement, and placed itself at its head, was France. It is unnecessary to refer to the extreme forms which these principles have occasionally taken in that country; the broad fact is all that we have to do with here. The “principles of the Revolution” reduce themselves in the last analysis to the two above mentioned (with the addition, in exceptional intensity, of the principle of “equality”), and the principles of the Revolution, in one form or another, — philosophically interpreted, grotesquely exaggerated, or brutally caricatured,

* The army, in its great majority, is simply a portion of the rural population, drilled or supposed to be drilled, into intenser Napoleon-worship.

— constitute the only approach to political convictions, the only materials out of which a national creed can ever be constructed which France has to offer.

But we have no wish to betake ourselves to the facile triumphs of an *a priori* argument. We appeal to facts.

The Napoleonic system, of an absolute monarchy, based upon universal suffrage, is a political monstrosity, possible only where the masses, who supply the approving majority, are entirely destitute of all political education. With such a system the legislative influence of the enlightened classes is wholly irreconcilable. The two cannot exist side by side, unless under the condition of internecine hostility. This proposition seems almost self-evident, and yet its force entirely escaped the French Emperor, who, from first to last, has steadily pursued his policy, of keeping the provinces in pupilage and ignorance, while he has, from time to time, yielded to the pressure of the towns, and ceded large privileges to the educated minority.

We have already mentioned that the liberal opposition was, in the first imperial legislature, wholly unrepresented,* and that, in the second (elected in 1857), it only numbered five members. These five members, however, were sent up from Paris and other leading towns, revealing, when the immense efforts of the bureaucracy against their return were taken into account, an intensity of disaffection never dreamt of by the self-complacent autocrat. The attempt of Orsini followed shortly afterwards (January 14, 1858), to complete the rudeness of his awakening; and under the first terror of the revelations connected with that conspiracy, — revelations prudently withheld from the public, — the atrocious *loi de sûreté générale* was passed, which imposed fine, imprisonment, and even exile upon the mere utterance of opinions hostile to the government of the Emperor. The organization of a system of *espionage*, both

* The eloquent Orleanist, Montalembert, cannot properly be classed with the liberal opposition. His indignant protest, in the senate chamber, however, against the degraded position of the legislature, and particularly against the confiscation of the Orleans possessions, deserves record. "I find it stated, in your decree," he said, "that enough will remain to the princes of the house of Orleans to take an honorable position. This is exactly the same language which was held three years ago, when I was told, 'If we take from M. de Montalembert half his estates, he will still be quite rich enough.'"

private and public, was the natural result; and, for some time, the demoralizing era of the infamous Fouché seemed about to be revived.

But Louis Napoleon soon perceived that this was not the course adapted either to the people or the age. The courageous plain-speaking of the press, in the teeth of ceaseless and merciless persecution, would alone have sufficed to open his eyes to the volcanic nature of the ground on which he was treading.* With one of those sudden *tours*, characteristic of the man, and well fitted to impress the melodramatic fancy of the Gaul with the idea of profound reflection and sharp, unbending decision, but in whose manifest inconsistency calm criticism detects a policy based on nothing deeper than a shrewd guess at the prevailing drift of the moment, the Emperor abandoned the path he had entered, and astonished the world by a decree (November 24, 1860) which, at first sight, looked like a return to parliamentary days. The legislative body received, by this decree, the right to amend government bills, and to vote an address in reply to the speech from the throne, stating therein what measures were deemed desirable for the national interest. Above all, its sittings were permitted in future to be public, and its debates free. The burst of rapture and of adulation which followed these really insignificant concessions gave painful evidence of the state of debasement into which France had fallen. After the first effervescence had passed, however, a calm examination produced different feelings, and the decree was soon in danger of being as much depreciated as it had at first been overvalued. It was the Emperor himself who came forward, in apparently frank good faith, to rehabilitate his concessions and explain their significance.

"Up to this day," he said, in the opening speech of the session of 1861, "the *discours d'ouverture* has failed to bring my government into sufficient intimacy with the great state bodies, and these have been deprived of the power to justify the government by their public adhesion or to enlighten it by their counsels.

* In 1857 and 1858 the *Revue de Paris*, the *Assemblée Nationale*, and the *Manuel Général de l'Instruction primaire* were suppressed; the *Presse* was thrice "warned," and finally "suppressed"; the *Siècle*, the *Gazette de France*, the *Constitutionnel*, were repeatedly "warned," the publisher of the former fined and imprisoned also.

I have decided to place annually before you a general review of the situation of the Empire, as well as the most important diplomatic despatches. In your address you can manifest your sentiments concerning the events taking place (*les faits qui s'accroplissent*), not, as hitherto, by a simple paraphrase of the speech from the throne, but by a free and loyal expression of opinion. In former times, as you know, the suffrage was limited. The Chamber of Deputies had, indeed, ampler prerogatives, but the great number of public functionaries admitted to it gave the government a direct influence over its resolutions. The Chamber of Peers also voted laws, but the majority could, at any moment, be displaced by the addition of new members; moreover, measures were not always discussed on their real merits, but rather on the chance of their adoption or rejection keeping in or ousting a ministry. At the present day, the laws are carefully and maturely prepared by a council of enlightened men, who give their advice on all measures in contemplation. The Senate, the guardian of the national compact, whose conservative power only makes use of its initiative in circumstances of gravity, examines the laws solely with reference to their constitutionality. But, as a genuine political court of appeal, the numbers which compose it cannot be augmented. The Legislative Body does not, it is true, interfere in all the details of administration, but it is directly nominated by universal suffrage, and counts no public functionary in its bosom. It debates measures with the most entire liberty; if they are rejected, it is a warning not unheeded by the government (*un avertissement dont le gouvernement tient compte*); but this rejection neither gives a shock to power, arrests the course of affairs, nor forces upon the sovereign advisers in whom he cannot confide. . . . Exhaust all discussions, gentlemen, during your vote on the address, according to the measure of their gravity, that you may afterwards devote yourselves entirely to the affairs of the nation."

This speech — from which we have given the above long extract on account of its authoritative exposition of the posture of the legislative body at the moment,—created a most favorable impression, and the five liberal members already referred to availed themselves at once of the conceded right of

free discussion by proposing as an amendment to the address a demand for the abolition of the *loi de sureté générale* and all other exceptional laws, including more particularly those on the press, and the detestable system of official candidature.

The question of the press was naturally one of the most urgent. Free and public legislative debates seemed almost of necessity to imply the right to print these debates and to discuss their substance. A concession of some kind was indispensable here, but the meagre measure brought in by the government showed at once that this concession was to be nothing more than a sham. By the new law the administrative *régime* to which the press was subjected remained unchanged. The sole alteration it made in the despotic decree of 1852 was to strike out the proviso entailing suppression of a journal after two condemnations for *contraventions et délits*, and to declare that administrative "warnings" were to be considered as of no effect after the lapse of two years. No wonder that the eloquent Jules Favre, the leader of the liberal forlorn hope, protested against this law as utterly out of harmony with the recent decree. "I fearlessly assert," he exclaimed, "that, as matters now stand, there is no press in France but a government press, no opinion professed except the opinion dictated or authorized beforehand by the administration itself. And how could it be otherwise? Has not the same power which authorizes the creation of a journal reserved for itself the right to strike it dead at its good pleasure? . . . Liberty must be restored to the press!" he cried, addressing the Minister (M. Billault) in direct terms; "as long as it is withheld you will meet here a determined adversary, who, on every opportunity, will proclaim to the country that the wish to retain arbitrary power is in itself a confession of incurable weakness!" To this courageous interpellation M. Billault opposed a statement of the home policy of the government which was probably more candid than the Emperor considered at the moment desirable. "Do not imagine," he said, "that the grand act of the 24th November is one of those concessions under favor of which the enemy, already in the environs, finishes by penetrating into and mastering the fortress. All the foundations on

which the government policy and the public security rest — the law of general safety, the *régime* of the press, the patronage exercised by government in the elections — are now attacked. But the very speeches we hear in this chamber prove clearly enough that the government cannot go further without compromising itself. Messieurs," continued the speaker, "en présence des partis qui s'agitent, le gouvernement n'abandonnera pas son droit, qu'il tient du peuple, d'empêcher les réunions électorales là où ces réunions offriraient un danger ; il n'abandonnera pas son droit d'appuyer certaines candidatures en face de celles que patronneront les partis ; il ne dissondra pas cette chambre qui a si bien servi le pays ; il ne modifiera pas la position que le plébiscite de 1852 a faite du pouvoir."

There could be no mistake about language like this. But what are we to think of the policy of which it is the exponent? The concessions made could not possibly have been dictated by any other motive than that of conciliating liberal opinion. Now liberal opinion in France comprises, notoriously, the vast majority of the intelligence of the country. Could a really far-sighted ruler persuade himself, for a moment, that miserable scraps of liberality like these would satisfy anybody of intelligence? The thing is inconceivable. To such men either a full measure must be meted out, or absolute denial must be persevered in. Either a liberal system in good faith, or a repressive system. The government that oscillates between the two inevitably loses ground on both sides. Its own adherents waver in their faith, and the opponents it hopes to disarm only become more embittered by the deceptions practised on them, and more emboldened by what little they have won.

The thorny question of the publication of the debates was settled by a *Senatus-consulte*, which ruled that authorized summaries of these should be transmitted every night to all the newspapers. A short-hand report of the same debates *in extenso* was also to be inserted daily in the *Moniteur*, and the journals were at liberty to publish either the summary or the report, but must print whichever was selected, *entire*.

The latter proviso was evidently aimed against any inclination to give undue prominence to favorite orators. The government

was itself the first to transgress it. Terrified by the eloquent utterances of the opposition, which daily grew more vehement, it had recourse to the more stringent machinery already referred to, and prohibited, by ministerial *communiqués*, the publication of arguments which it felt itself powerless to refute. The *communiqué* indeed began now to take the place of the *avertissement*, with a positively retrograde force, because tending to substitute a preventive for a coercive policy ; actions for *délits de presse*, too, became daily more numerous and sentences more severe. Not the less, however, nay, rather the more, did the enfranchised tribune assert its power, and in 1862 we find the Corps Legislatif twice rejecting a bill for an annuity to Count Palikao, although brought forward under the avowed patronage of the Emperor, by whom it was ultimately made law in spite of the chamber's dissent !

Meanwhile the general election of 1863 was drawing near, and the government might well be supposed to be intently studying the signs of the times. If such was the case, however, the result of those studies did not speak much for their depth. The opposition to the system of "official candidature" was one of the strongest points of the liberal party. The system itself was in flagrant contradiction with the most elementary notion of the representative principle. It was condemned and ridiculed by the public opinion of Europe, and its defenders could adduce no single argument which would bear the most superficial analysis. Under circumstances of the kind one would imagine that proceedings so offensive would at least be conducted as quietly and unostentatiously as possible. If absolutely indispensable to the maintenance of a government so constituted, a decent veil would surely be thrown over them, and the wheels of the bureaucratic machine would be brought to smoother and more noiseless action. The very reverse course was adopted ! Two central committees, formed in Paris at the commencement of the electoral campaign, one representing a fusion of the Orleanists, legitimists, and moderate liberals, with the Duke de Broglie as its president, the other consisting of the more thoroughgoing liberals of 1848, and presided over by Carnot, were broken up at once, in virtue of the law against *réunions*, though this law was really meant to apply only to

assemblies menacing the public peace. An angry circular was publicly addressed by M. de Persigny to all the *préfets* throughout France, declaring that the government had withdrawn its patronage from certain deputies, twenty-four in number, who, although elected on the "official" ticket, had presumed to vote with the opposition upon the Roman question, — one of the most unpopular measures to which the government was pledged, — and a letter from the Minister of the Interior was inserted in the *Moniteur*, announcing that the administration would oppose, with the utmost energy, the election of M. Thiers. The result was exactly what might, with a small exercise of common sense, have been foreseen. Out of an aggregate of, in round numbers, ten million electors, five million three hundred and fifty-five thousand only cast their votes for the government, and two million supported the opposition; while the remainder did not vote at all. The liberal representation was increased from five to thirty-six members; Paris, out of nine liberal candidates returning eight, among whom was, of course, M. Thiers. The immense number of non-voters — above two and a half million — might well have made the government ponder on its position. With a zealous far-spreading bureaucracy like that of France, employed to secure the largest possible vote for the government, it was next to impossible that all these men could be indifferent to the administration. Indifference must inevitably have yielded to the stimulants ceaselessly applied by *préfets*, *sous-préfets*, and *maires*. Were they then opposed to the government? This was scarcely likely either, as in such a case the strong political excitement of the day would have driven them to the ballot-box. The probability is that these abstainers represented, for the most part, the *dissatisfied* element, — that they were men who had their doubts of the policy pursued, and refused their approving vote accordingly. But to which side, then, would these doubts apply? Certainly not to the repressive policy of the government, which could not well be more stringent, but rather to its liberal policy, which could not well be more hesitating or vague. Here, then, was material upon which the mature power of the government had already failed to act, but which the growing force of liberal opinion could fairly hope to influence, as it would infallibly strive to do.

Was the gravity of this situation appreciated by the Emperor and his advisers? Not in any way. The speech from the throne was unusually colorless, and the only reforms spoken of, at all deserving the name, were a law permitting trades-unions conditionally, and a law giving ampler functions to the general and municipal councils.

Meanwhile the opposition in the Chambers, formidable comparatively as it had become, was treated with haughty contempt by the majority; and in his reply to the address of 1864, the Emperor coolly observed: "Let us each remain in our proper spheres. You, gentlemen, enlightening and controlling the progress of the government, *I taking the initiative in all that may promote the greatness and prosperity of France!*"

The home policy of the following year was distinguished by the reorganization of the municipal councils, and a circular, from the Minister of the Interior instructing the *préfets* to allow the municipal electors to manifest their choice freely, "inasmuch as local interests only were in question at such elections." The *conseils généraux* of the Seine and Marne, presuming on the conceded amplification of their functions, ventured to pass certain resolutions, chiefly concerned with improvements in their own internal organization. The "liberty" was checked at once, and the resolutions were declared null and void by imperial decree.*

The eventful year 1866 opened amid unusual tranquillity. "For the first time during many years the quidnuncs allowed spring to approach without predicting a general European war!" The imperial finances, always more or less disordered,

* It was on the occasion of a somewhat similar "liberty" taken by the council general of the Haute Garonne, a few years earlier, that Napoleon administered to that abashed body a most signal rebuke. "Un homme," he said, "qui sort de la vie privée pour venir passer trois ou quatre jours au chef-lieu de son département, fait une chose également inconvenante et ridicule lorsqu', à la faveur de quelques observations utiles sur l'administration particulière de son département, il se permet des observations critiques et incohérentes. . . . Sans doute il a été un temps où la confusion de toutes les idées, la faiblesse extraordinaire de l'administration générale, les intrigues qui l'agitaient, faisaient penser à beaucoup de citoyens isolés qu'ils étaient plus sages que ceux qui les gouvernaient et qu'ils avaient plus de capacité pour les affaires. Ce temps n'est plus. L'Empereur n'écoute personne que dans la sphère des attributions respectives." The nephew here seems to have caught the very trick of the uncle's style!

seemed to be gradually improving under the able supervision of M. Fould; and the dissensions of Prussia and Austria, which had not yet passed out of the field of diplomacy, promised to France a speedy opportunity of again asserting herself, under exceptionally imposing conditions, as the arbiter of Europe. The liberal party meanwhile waited with anxiety for the speech from the throne. It seemed to them impossible that, in the face of their own manifest progress, the path of reform, entered upon so long ago as 1860, should still remain a mere *cul de sac*.

Their hopes were doomed to signal disappointment. The expected speech passed an elaborate eulogy on the Constitution of 1852, which, "holding itself equally aloof from both extremes, had founded a national and sagely matured system on the just equilibrium of the different powers of the state." This instrument of despotism was declared, with solemn irony, "to have certain analogies with the constitutional forms of the United States," and the hearers were informed that the fact of its differing from the English Constitution was no proof of its being defective. "Have we not had enough discussion of government theories during the last eighty years?" exclaimed the imperial Pecksniff. "Is it not far more useful now to seek practical means to ameliorate the moral and material condition of the people? Let us employ ourselves in diffusing everywhere, along with enlightenment, sound economical doctrines, the love of excellence, and religious principles. When all Frenchmen now invested with the political franchise shall have been enlightened by education, they will have no difficulty in recognizing truth, and will not allow themselves to be led astray by deceitful appearances; finally, when all shall have imbibed from childhood those principles of faith and of morality which elevate man in his own eyes, they will know that, above human intelligence, above the efforts of science and of reason, there exists a supreme Will which rules the destinies of individuals as well as of nations."

The stupor with which this sentimental eulogy of absolutism was listened to by earnest men, whose whole life had been one struggle for a political freedom, which the imperial speaker seemed a short time before to have dangled before their eyes

for the mere pleasure of jerking it now beyond their reach, may be easily imagined. Words of this kind addressed to such men were manifestly nothing but a transparent cloak for contemptuous repudiation, and the canting form given to the words rendered the contempt all the more stinging.

As if to remove any possible doubt as to the reactionary significance of this speech, M. de Persigny favored the Senate with an amplification of the eulogy, and characterized the recent reorganization of the municipal councils as a mistake, — a departure from the true and admirable principle of authority.* The *Moniteur* published at the same time a ministerial note recalling to the recollection of the press, in severe terms, the law which forbade the insertion of any other than the official report of the proceedings of the legislature.

In the Corps Legislatif a most determined stand was made against this attitude of the government, and all France thrilled with the burning eloquence of those debates. The challenge to abstract political discussion so imprudently given by the speech from the throne and by M. de Persigny was taken up at once, and the imperial logic was torn to shreds by M. Thiers and M. Jules Favre, amid the tempestuous agitation of the house. But the most significant event of the session was the amendment to the address. This amendment, which called for the development of the decree of the 24th November, 1860, "the propriety and opportuneness of which appear to have been formally demonstrated by an experience of five years," was signed by forty-six members, several of whom had been elected on the "official ticket," while all the other signers, although not government partisans, were known to desire the stability of the Empire. The amendment was of course rejected, but it obtained the respectable number of sixty-one votes, and a second amendment, presented on the following day, under the same auspices, and having reference solely to the press obtained five adherents more. A minority of sixty-six formed

* On this reorganization the government had given a sort of promise to select the *maires*, in future, from the members of the municipal councils, instead of nominating them, as heretofore, from among mere political partisans, without reference to their local relations. This promise, however, was so far from being carried out, that in six hundred and ninety two cases it had already been disregarded.

outside of the proper liberal (or republican) party was thus the direct result of the Emperor's reactionary policy, and the very parliamentary organization which he most dreaded was stimulated into more rapid growth by his own misjudged efforts to stifle it. The Corps Legislatif had now its *centre gauche*,* and the party was no sooner constituted than it obtained the adhesion of M. Emile Ollivier, who had formed one of the illustrious minority of five in the first imperial Chamber, but had recently quarrelled with his old associates. "On nous refuse à présent," exclaimed M. Ollivier at the close of his eloquent speech on the amendment, "mais on ne saurait nous empêcher de prendre par l'espérance possession de l'avenir. Oui; l'avenir nous appartient; pour le hâter, reconnaissons-nous, rapprochons-nous, concertons-nous, afin que notre union fasse notre force, en attendant qu'elle fasse notre victoire." If the magic crystal of Egypt could have been held up at that moment before his eyes, how would the glowing orator have started to see in it his rhetorical prophecy realized for one brief brilliant moment; and how he would have shuddered at the blank darkness beyond!

Meanwhile events were silently preparing themselves, which were destined to lay bare to the world the emptiness of the imperial system and its profoundly demoralizing influence upon the noble, but impulsive, people who had been deceived by its shallow self-confidence and dazzled by its glitter. The traditional foreign policy of France has been to prevent her immediate neighbors, as far as might be, from becoming too powerful. Second-rate neighbors, whom she can treat patronizingly, and on whose eager and respectful assistance she may reasonably count in case of an emergency, have always been considered by France her proper and desirable *entourage*. The Italian policy of the Emperor had already created dissatisfaction by its want of harmony with this policy; and the feeling had been but partially allayed by the brilliant successes of Magenta and Solferino, by the sublime consciousness of fight-

* The party divisions of the French Chamber are usually distinguished, as the *Right*, consisting of the supporters of the government through thick and thin; the *Right Centre*, consisting of its moderate supporters; the *Left*, or extreme radical party; and the *Left Centre*, or moderate liberal (Conservative) party.

ing, as no other country ever fought, "purely for an idea," and by the annexation of Savoy and Nice.

Among the "not too powerful" neighbors of France was the German Confederation, which, although possessed of all the elements of gigantic strength, had long lacked cohesion and unity, and possessed only a dreamy flickering sense of its own individuality. The German Confederation had been so long inert, except for its occasional intestine commotions, that Europe had gradually come to regard its qualification of "an eminently conservative body" in the light, not of a contingent, but of an essential attribute. *Ces gros Allemands* were set down, by France especially, as obese, phlegmatic, unambitious beings, whose lives were complete with a pipe, a glass of "lager," and a drowsy discussion of transcendental metaphysics. It was wholly forgotten, apparently, that they were pure-blooded descendants of the same men who had overturned the Roman Empire and reconstructed the map of the world.

Recently, however, these good Germans had been making themselves uncomfortably conspicuous. This is not the place to recapitulate the incidents of the Schleswig-Holstein war, and it is sufficient to mention that this war revealed a restless, energetic ambition on the part of Prussia which awakened in the more far-seeing of European statesmen dim presentiments of serious future complications, and seemed at any rate clearly to indicate that the antagonism of the two leading German powers—an antagonism which had contributed so much to that "eminent conservatism" of the Confederation—was tending towards a collision which would probably terminate, forever that desirable state of things. The respective occupation, by these powers, of the two Duchies of the Elbe gave the immediate pretext to this collision; and it was in that preliminary pause which always precedes a death-struggle of the kind,—when the antagonists silently collect their strength and count their friends,—that the Emperor showed that limited sagacity, one of the latest results of which has been his own ruin.

Having secured the neutrality of Russia, by holding up to her that principle of nationality which has always had a

special and portentous attraction for that power, Prussia looked around for some active ally who might counterbalance the well-known traditional influence of Austria with the secondary German states. That ally was found at once in Austria's "natural enemy," Italy; with her an offensive and defensive alliance was speedily concluded. Without this alliance it seems scarcely probable that Prussia would have ventured upon the conflict. But at that period the influence of France over Italy was supreme; and there is not the slightest doubt that, had France pronounced a single disapproving word, the alliance referred to would never have been effected. Why was that word not pronounced? The answer to this question has already almost passed from the domain of conjecture into that of historic certainty. During the stormy debates of 1867, the veteran liberal, Garnier Pagès, affirmed categorically that Count Bismarck, on his visit to Biarritz, in 1865,—a visit destined to be the *Tilsit manqué* of the Second Empire,—had explicitly offered to Louis Napoleon the Rhine frontier as the price of adhesion to Prussian schemes, and that this offer had been "neither accepted nor rejected" by the imperial wisdom. This statement was never denied; and the celebrated "draft treaty," in Count Benedetti's handwriting, which was given to the world the other day in the London *Times*, may safely be considered a reproduction *après coup* of Bismarck's offer,—but a reproduction which, under the altered circumstances, Prussia could afford to put aside with civil contempt, as one might put aside the begging-letter of a bankrupt *roturier*, who a few days before had thought his wealth entitled him to treat all his acquaintance with haughty condescension.

The fact no doubt is, that when Napoleon III. warily refrained either from explicitly rejecting or explicitly accepting Count Bismarck's offer, his motive was to hold himself free to demand, when the right moment came, still better terms. He looked forward to a long war, exhausting to both antagonists, but to Prussia, in all probability, fatal; and he believed that at the end of it he would be able to step loftily forward as the supreme arbiter of the destinies of the belligerents, and to secure all sorts of good things for the mere asking. Under the

influence of these anticipations, while refusing to commit himself in any way on the Prussian statesman's proposal, Napoleon had conceded all that Prussia really desired, — the neutrality of France, — while the attitude he himself assumed enabled the Court of Berlin to meet Benedetti's subsequent suggestions with the unanswerable reply: "You are too late! Had you accepted our original offer, we should, of course, have been true to our engagements. You declined to commit yourself, and we also are uncommitted."

That Louis Napoleon had confidently counted upon the triumph of Austria is no mere conjecture of ours. With that conspicuous want of judgment, which the world in general, dazzled by the sudden blaze of his elevation, was long unable to discover, he made this conviction public in one of those oracular letters to his Minister of State, which form a curious feature of his government. The letter we refer to was addressed to M. Drouyn de Lhuys on the 11th of June, 1866, on the eve, that is, of the Austro-Prussian conflict. In this most injudicious document Napoleon lays down — under a conditional form indeed, but not the less dogmatically on that account — what the foreign policy of his government is, as far as the belligerent states are concerned. Had the conference which he had suggested to these states taken place, M. Drouyn de Lhuys would have been instructed to declare therein, that France would only require an extension of frontier in case the European equilibrium were destroyed. The German modifications which the imperial policy would have urged at that conference would have been the following: For the secondary states, he would have asked a closer union, a more powerful organization, and a more important share in the Confederate system; for Prussia, more homogeneity and force in the Northern direction; for Austria, *the maintenance of her great position in Germany*, but the cession of Venetia to Italy in return for an equitable compensation.

Why Louis Napoleon should have committed himself to a categorical prophecy of this kind seems inexplicable, unless on the hypothesis that, by dint of constantly attitudinizing as "the man of fate," he had ended with really supposing himself to be infallible. In this case, at any rate, Fate signally dis-

proved his familiarity with her decrees. The results of the Austro-Prussian conflict were as directly the reverse of the Emperor's expectations as they could well be. The secondary states, — those, at least, north of the Main, — instead of acquiring a closer union and larger share in the Confederate system, were subjected to the hegemony of Prussia, which had annexed Hanover and the Elbe Duchies, and made herself the absolute mistress of the military forces of a population of twenty-nine millions. Finally, Austria, so far from retaining her "great position," found herself absolutely excluded from Germany, and had to cede Venetia without any compensation whatever. This was, indeed, cancelling the treaties of 1815, but cancelling them to the profit of Prussia and Italy alone, and to the serious detriment of France.

But the letter of the 11th of June had contained a declaration as well as a prophecy. In case the equilibrium of Europe were disturbed, France would require territorial aggrandizement. The hypothesis had been most signally fulfilled, and, as a matter of course, the world looked for the fulfilment of the consequence also. Was the Luxemburg affair, with its humiliatingly impotent conclusion,* the sole effort made in that direction. Most certainly not, as the Times's "secret treaty" plainly shows. But whatever these efforts may have been, — however numerous and however importunate, — it is certain that they met with only one reception from Prussia, — a civil but decisive negative.

From that hour the fate of the Empire was virtually sealed. Its prestige was gone. The idea of French supremacy, which had hitherto been associated with it, almost as its synonyme, proved baseless, and it was left to hold its own, as it best might, on its own intrinsic merits.

* The little Grand Duchy of Luxemburg had been a member of the late German Confederation, and its capital — one of the most strongly fortified places in Europe — had been declared a federal fortress by the treaties of Vienna, and was garrisoned exclusively by Prussians. This arrangement was, of course, invalidated by the dissolution of the Confederation, and France seized the opportunity to negotiate for the acquisition of Luxemburg. This acquisition would have satisfied the terms of the celebrated letter of the 11th June, and would have given France another stronghold against Germany. The failure of the negotiation before the opposition of Prussia, and the compromise of a mere demolition of the fortifications, which France had to accept, will be remembered.

Louis Napoleon had at least sagacity enough to see how desperate was the position which he had made for himself. But his efforts to secure the retrieval of that position were as little marked by true statesmanship as the conduct by which he had compromised it. As a first step, — with, apparently, some faint hope of throwing the responsibility of the letter of the 11th June from its writer upon its recipient, — M. Drouyn de Lhuys was summarily dismissed, and a circular was issued by his *ad interim* successor, contradicting, as plainly as decency would allow, all the positions laid down in the letter referred to. According to M. de La Valette, the efforts of Germany at unification were worthy of all encouragement. They were only “an imitation of France,” and were calculated rather to draw the two nations closer together than to separate them. The modern tendency of the European peoples, indeed, to group themselves according to nationalities, gradually absorbing the secondary states, sprang evidently from the desire to secure for their general interests more efficacious guaranties. In short, “from the more elevated point of view from which the imperial government surveyed the destinies of Europe, the horizon appeared to it wholly freed from menacing eventualities”; and France herself could discern nothing, on any side, calculated either to impede her progress or to trouble her prosperity.

We give here only the conclusions of Marquis de La Valette’s elaborate and skilful exposition. Unfortunately for his impressiveness, it was incumbent on the writer to add a paragraph which, by no logical *tour de force*, could be fitted into the argument. “The results of the last war,” the Marquis was compelled to say, “contain a grave lesson for us. *They point out to us the necessity, for the defence of our territory, of perfecting our military organization without a moment’s delay.*”

A singular necessity, truly, to spring from the disappearance of all menacing eventualities! The proverbial dialectic readiness of the Frenchman seized at once upon the *non sequitur*, and when M. Rouher favored the Corps Legislatif with an oratorical *rechauffé* of the Minister of State’s circular, Jules Favre, amid a scene of stormy agitation, put to him the following formidable dilemma: “Either the speech you have

made us is a mere piece of conventional show (*n'est autre chose qu'une ostentation nécessaire*), corresponding in no way to notorious political realities, or you are bound to withdraw the bill for military reorganization, which you have just laid before us."

But, by that fatality which proverbially attends untruth in every form, poor M. Rouher was not contented with retailing the fallacies of his superior. He must needs, in his zeal, develop and expand them. Germany, more homogeneous, M. de La Valette had said, approaches us nearer in sympathies, and so gives us additional guaranties of peace. "France must congratulate herself," exclaimed M. Rouher, "to see the old German Confederation, an enormous mass of seventy-five millions, whose purely defensive character was a mere illusion, broken up, as it now is, *into three fragments*."

It would be difficult to imagine any position more flagrantly in contradiction, not only with the uneasy national presentiments of the moment, but with the common-sense view of Europe in general. The evil genius of the Emperor—the man who, with sleepless vigilance, and with a political penetration rarely matched, had now set himself to undermine the paste-board colossus—saw his opportunity, and seized it at once. M. Rouher's rash fallacy had scarcely been uttered, when Count Bismarck quietly gave to the world the secret treaties of defensive alliance which, immediately after the Peace of Prague, had virtually conferred upon Prussia the military control of the Southern German States, as well as of the Northern. The incredulous smile with which Europe had received the French Minister's speech was changed at once into a derisive laugh, and the Emperor had to endure a public humiliation. Of M. Rouher's "three fragments," two were shown to be really one, and the third was crippled Austria!

The situation was growing daily more critical. What was to be done? To arm France rapidly but unostentatiously, perhaps for a mere assertion of power, perhaps for a desperate struggle, to soothe popular anxiety and remove popular discontent, were the ideas which suggested themselves at once to the imperial mind and which were at once translated into action. The grand "Universal Exposition" of 1867 would

contribute greatly, it was thought, to the latter of these objects. It would give enhanced wages to numberless artisans, it would attract hosts of generous and magnificent visitors to Paris, and would make that city, for the time being, literally the brilliant metropolis of the civilized world. To some extent these anticipations were realized. But — as if Fortune were weary or ashamed of her late favorite — even this dazzling show was not to pass without its episode of humiliation. In the middle of an imperial *fête* a telegram, it is said, dated Queretaro, Mexico, was handed to the Emperor, containing the terrible words, “Maximilian was shot to-day.” No wonder that Louis Napoleon’s cheek blanched and that his eye quailed as he read that sentence. The noble young enthusiast, whose miserable death it recorded, had been placed by *his* hand on that fatal throne; and the ephemeral empire, on whose *débris* the youthful corse was flung, had been kept together only by the blood and treasure of France. Among all “sad stories of the deaths of kings,” this was one of the saddest, if its painful accompaniments be taken into account.

But if the Emperor’s fantastic dream of a Latin Transatlantic counterpoise to Anglo-Saxon expansion had proved a melancholy failure, if Prussia had struck from his hand the sceptre of European supremacy, and Count Bismarck had shown the shallowness of his claims to political wisdom, Louis Napoleon, with a nation like France at his disposition, — a nation so great in every sense, of such vast resources, such ready enthusiasm, such self-reliance, and such rare military instinct, — could still hope to retrieve everything, to recover all, or nearly all, he had forfeited, and to see himself again mighty as the acknowledged representative of the interests and desires of the French people.

To do this, it was, probably, only necessary to appreciate accurately the prevailing national tendencies of France, and to accord to these a frank and legitimate recognition. Now in nations constituted as those of Europe chiefly are, where what may be called political education is confined almost exclusively to the “wealthy and intelligent” minority, while the mass of the people possess, if any, only the vaguest and most elementary notions of government and systems of govern-

ment, the index to national tendencies must be sought perforce in the politically educated minority alone. The stolid, intellectually inert rural population of France, upon which the Empire rested, is utterly incapable of theorizing in politics. To it absolutism and constitutionalism are words alike void of meaning. "Red Republicanism" and "Socialism," on the contrary, convey a clear conception to their minds, and that conception is the abolition of the rights of property, the forfeiture, without compensation, of the few *hectares* of soil which they have inherited from generation to generation, or purchased with the toil-won hoards of many patient years, and every furrow of which has been fertilized with the sweat of their brow. "Government" to these men means the strong arm that can secure them against forfeiture of this kind, — this, and nothing more. Details to them are mere surplusage, and names are but empty words. Call your government absolute or constitutional, at your good pleasure. Let your ministers be responsible or irresponsible, bridle your press or give it the rein, do anything, *au nom de Dieu*, to suit your fancy, but *dame!* save us from Socialism and Red Republicanism! Leave us our little ground in peace. Let us drink cider from our own orchards and eat *galette* of our own barley as our forefathers did, and we will pay our taxes cheerfully, and you may go on speechifying about politics in your Chamber there for ever and ever.

There is no doubt that this is, as nearly as possible, the view taken of politics by the mass of the rural population in France, and that had Louis Napoleon possessed a sufficiently unbiassed judgment, with sufficient decision of character and largeness of views, he might have converted his autocratic government into a limited monarchy, and so have secured the support of the intelligent minority, rendered his throne stable, and France herself doubly powerful by a genuine national unity, without risking in any way the loss of his rural supporters. An inkling of this seems, every now and then, to have crossed his mind. But the curse of the *Idées Napoléoniennes* — the despot's idea that government means autocracy and that politics mean cajolery — lay heavy upon him and dragged him down. A few short months after the eulogy on absolutism pro-

nounced on opening the session of 1866, we find the Emperor coming forward again as a letter-writer, but with opinions diametrically opposed to those of the speech from the throne. "Aujourd'hui," he writes to his Minister, on the 19th of January, 1867, evidently under the influence of the ideas just now referred to, — "aujourd'hui je crois qu'il est possible de donner aux institutions de l'empire *tout le développement* dont elles sont susceptibles, sans compromettre le pouvoir que la nation m'a confié." After this injudicious "finality" exordium, the imperial scribe proceeds to develop his thesis. The discussion on the address has proved a mere wasteful tourney of words. It is abolished, and the right of ministerial interpellation, "prudently regulated," is granted in its place. The Ministers are to be present in future in the Chambers and to take part in the debates; the law of public meetings is to be modified, and the *délits de presse* are to be transferred from the discretionary power of the government to the tribunals of correctional police.

These concessions, which the Emperor pompously called "le couronnement de l'édifice élevé par la volonté nationale," were, it will be perceived, sufficiently meagre. They had, however, this peculiarity about them, that they corresponded, almost article by article, with the programme of the celebrated minority of forty-six, who had signed the amendment to the address of the previous session! Now this amendment had been rejected, with scorn and indignation, by the imperialists of the "Right" as an insult to the crown, a miserable dallying with revolution. The profound lucubrations, therefore, of this imperial master of political wisdom resulted in measures which were received in sullen, shamefaced silence by his most enthusiastic supporters, and coldly welcomed by those whom they were meant to conciliate, as an unavoidable concession to the pressure of circumstances.

But the autocrat could not yield up even this meagre portion of personal power loyally and honestly. Every possible device was resorted to to extract the kernel from the ceded franchises and leave their recipients nothing but a shell. Public meetings for electoral purposes were, indeed, allowed within certain fixed dates; but so many minute formal regulations, with severe penalties for infringement, surrounded the privilege,

that few would care to avail themselves of it, and in any case the Minister could forbid and the *préfet* dissolve, at pleasure. In press matters the same dishonest, tricky course was pursued. The penalties of imprisonment and of arbitrary suppression were done away with ; but a system of exorbitant fines was substituted, which could easily be so worked as to ruin any obnoxious journal ; and while printer and publisher were exempted from the obligation of a license, the writers themselves (whom a law of the sham Republic of 1848 still compels to sign their contributions with their true names) were subjected to a five years' deprivation of political rights, — an especially heavy penalty in France, where politics form an honorable career, in which the press is the ordinary starting-point. As for the transfer of competency to the Tribunals of Correctional Police, the French Magistracy, especially in its inferior grades, has become of late years so completely the tool of power that this concession was, in strictness, no more real than the others.* Thus the main results of the trumpeted reforms, taken altogether, were aggravated irritation and mistrust, with slightly increased facilities for their manifestation.

But even these measures, pure snares and delusions as they were, took many months to assume a practical form ; and when they did so, which was not until 1868, signs were already abroad of another imperial *volte-face* in the reactionary direction. Bristling with penal formalities, however, as the new press law was, the mere abolition of the arbitrary *régime*, although barely more than nominal, gave a stimulus to journalism which proved incontestably how great that expansive force must be which could produce so much when the repressing weight was lightened so little. Within six weeks from the promulgation of the law, thirty new papers had sprung up in Paris alone, conspicuous among which was Rochefort's *Lan-*

* The above assertion will scarcely be called in question by any one who went carefully through the report of the late trial of Prince Pierre Bonaparte. A remarkably able French contributor to the London *Pall Mall Gazette* writes in January last as follows : " The Magistracy, under the reign of Messrs. Baroche, Delangle, and Troplong, has failed to withstand the deplorable influences surrounding it. No one believes in the guaranty of irremovability, and as all promotion is in the hands of government, ambition is naturally fostered at the cost of conscience."

terne; while the provinces, within the same brief period, added sixty-five to their original starveling supply.* Endless press trials were the immediate result,—convictions virtually inevitable, and penalties excessive. The daring and force, however, of the partially unchained giant defied all terrors of the kind. If one arm only was free, he was ready at once for the mortal combat, and the terrified government understood too late how implacable was the foe it had to deal with.† “Nous en sommes toujours aux procès de presse qui se multiplient,” writes the brilliant “chronicler” of the *Revue des deux Mondes* in December, 1868. And so it went on, day after day and month after month. Always the same old story, the same irreconcilable enmity, the same stern lessons, the same stubborn heedlessness, the same fated results.

But how was it, meanwhile, with the real creators and sustainers of the Second Empire,—the rural population? For these, as we have already pointed out, the Napoleonic *régime* represented two broad elementary notions,—the notion of French supremacy, satisfying their Gallic craving for glory; and the notion of authority, satisfying their economic requirements. Now the former of these notions had already received shock after shock,—the formidable rivalry of Prussia, the ignominious failure in Mexico, the checkmate in the Luxemburg game with Bismarck as well as in the Polish game with the Czar.‡ Before reiterated blows like these the cherished faith in France’s leadership of Europe was gradually giving way; and now the unhappy necessities of the case compelled the government itself to weaken the basis at least of the other elementary notion,—the absorbing economic interests of these peasant proprietors, the Empire’s true constituents.

* So completely had the discretionary *régime* succeeded in killing the provincial press, that at the commencement of 1868 seven of the largest provincial towns, representing an aggregate population of nearly a million and a half, only possessed eleven daily papers among them, whose total circulation did not reach one hundred and thirty thousand!

† The government attempt to revive the preventive system in a prohibition to advertise subscriptions for a monument to Baudin, one of the victims of the *coup d’état*, was openly defied by the whole independent press of Paris (November, 1868).

‡ This was in 1863, when France had to abandon her warlike attitude in favor of poor oppressed Poland, on the refusal of England and Austria to back her. The humiliation here could only exist for a country which so constantly boasts itself more than a match for “coalesced Europe.”

The census of France, for some years back, has puzzled statisticians, scandalized moralists, and delighted an influential school of Political Economy, by showing an annual increase of population greatly below that of any other country in the civilized world. Extraordinary and offensive theories of French immorality have been based upon this singular fact, — theories overthrown at once by the census tables themselves, which demonstrate that the one hundred and eighty-five *arrondissements*, whose actually diminishing population explains the low general average of increase, are not those in which the large towns — the haunts of vice — are situated, but those which are specially classified as “agricultural.” The true key to the deficiency is unquestionably supplied in a very able paper upon the census of 1866, which was read before the French Institute by M. de Lavergne. This paper establishes, beyond dispute, a direct relation between the ratio of increase in population and the amount of the annual contingent claimed by the conscription. With a contingent of forty-six thousand men, population increases at a tolerable rate; with sixty thousand, its progress becomes sensibly slower; with one hundred thousand, there is as nearly as possible an equilibrium between births and deaths; and, when the contingent rises to one hundred and forty thousand men, the population actually declines. The conscription, then, is the true cause of the quasi stationary condition shown in the French census-tables. It is the drain of the vigorous youth of the country, which, taking the spring out of the year (to use a singularly vivid classical metaphor),* deadens its productive power, and, in accordance with an elementary economic law, diminishes the vital energies in like ratio.

Upon a rural population of peasant proprietors the conscription falls with exceptional severity. The young man it carries away represents the farm laborer, who, as the son of the house, works with all the heartiness and intelligence that community of interests proverbially inspires. To supply his place, even

* Την νεότητα ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ἀντρεῖσθαι, ὥσπερ τὸ ξαρ ἐκ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ εἰ ἐξαίρεται. (Arist. *Rhetoric*, i. 7. 2.) Aristotle gives the words as a quotation from Pericles's celebrated funeral oration. But the metaphor was evidently a favorite with the Greeks, as we find it in Herodotus also (vii. 162).

inefficiently, is a heavy tax upon the farmer ; and to provide a substitute is much oftener beyond his means than is the case with the city artisan, who has not, moreover, an equally strong personal motive to incur the expense.

No wonder, then, that the new military law of 1867,—the law so illogically demanded in M. de La Valette's circular of September, 1866, should awaken discontent even among these, the Emperor's stanchest supporters. This law, indeed, came out of the legislative crucible in a much milder form than that originally given to it,—thanks to the strong repugnance manifested by the entire nation to its first provisions. It added two years, however, to the whole term of service, but diminished by two the time to be passed in the active division of the army, and permitted marriage, after the first of four years in the reserve. The annual contingent was made one hundred thousand men (at which figure population becomes, according to M. de Lavergne, stationary), giving France a peace establishment of seven hundred and fifty thousand men,—five hundred thousand in the active army, and two hundred and fifty thousand in the reserve. Besides this, in imitation of the Prussian *landwehr*, all the young men not drawn for the annual contingent, or who are exempted from any other cause than under-size or bodily infirmity, were formed into a *Garde nationale mobile*, or *Garde mobile*, as it is commonly called, subject to fifteen days' — *not consecutive* — drill in the year, and liable to be called out for home service only, and that by a special law. The effective force of this body was estimated at half a million.

The state of things to which, by the end of 1868, Napoleon's "rare political wisdom" had brought France was simply this: abroad, her continental hegemony was virtually gone, her prestige obscured: at home, the consciousness of this eclipse had produced a general sense of humiliation,* extending to every class, and penetrating into every household, without distinction. Taking the country by sections, what do we find? A rural population, wavering in their simple Napoleon-worship, and distrustful of the future; operatives and proletaires,—direct legatees of the sanguinary fanaticism of

* The rise of Prussia, according to a writer in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, was regarded, throughout France, as *une sorte de déchéance*.

'89, and of that alone, — just as bitter in their hatred of imperialism as if they had never eaten bread from the Emperor's hand ; * a *bourgeoisie* intensely irritated at the tricky, insincere, shilly-shally policy, opposed to their own earnest and fervent struggles for enfranchisement, and gradually losing all awe of a man in whose reputed sagacity and decision of character they no longer believed ; a priesthood with sentiments very much akin, *mutatis mutandis*, to those of the operatives, eager to snatch at every good thing put in their way, but perfectly aware that the sole tie between themselves and the Empire was the need they had of each other for ends often discordant, and perfectly ready, at any moment, to change the blessing into an anathema, should their exclusive, corporate interests so demand ; † and, finally, the imperialist party proper, the Emperor's immediate adherents, profoundly dissatisfied by his concessions to their opponents, and, like them, utterly distrustful of the fast-and-loose policy, which seemed to be guided by no fixed principles whatsoever.

The elections of 1869 threw a startlingly clear light upon the state of parties, and revealed to Louis Napoleon the abyss upon whose slippery edge he was standing. Upon literally the very eve of these elections, however, the Emperor, with almost incredible want of tact, flagrantly insulted the retiring Corps Legislatif by deliberately overriding one of its formal acts, and placing himself again before the disaffected country in the character of an autocrat, pure and simple. ‡ At this same time

* At the "Workingmen's International Congress," held at Brussels in 1868, the portion of the Annual Report contributed by the French delegates is nothing but a bitter impeachment of their "would-be patron," the Emperor. "The French government, of course," it begins, "takes the lead in reactionary proceedings against the working classes." Such is the gratitude for some two hundred million dollars of public money spent upon Paris alone !

† On the Roman question, the priesthood turned at once against the Empire, and, during the Italian war, they were only partially prevented from offering public prayers for the success of Austria ! Louis Napoleon retaliated by the suppression of the Societies of St. Vincent de Paul, — an act which exposed him to furious clerical abuse.

‡ An increase of some \$ 50,000 on the school vote had been refused by the Chamber, after an animated discussion. A few days afterwards, a report from the Minister of Public Instruction appeared, with the imperial *approuvé* at foot, blaming this action of the Chamber, and coolly stating that not only \$ 50,000, but \$ 60,000, had been taken from other services, and appropriated to make good the injudicious parsimony of the legislature (May, 1869).

liberal ideas were so prevalent that even official candidates, although just as strenuously backed by the administration as ever, gave a certain constitutional coloring to their addresses, and, in many cases, affected to have no personal relations whatever with the *préfet*, who carefully kept up the deception. In spite, however, of bribery, corruption, and trickery, of all kinds,* the elections gave three and a half million votes to the opposition, and the Corps Legislatif of 1869 showed itself a regular parliamentary body, prepared for that healthy discussion of measures and principles which is utterly irreconcilable with the *régime* which Louis Napoleon had labored to found.†

But when this state of things had become as clear as the light of day, had the Emperor penetration enough to take a correct measure of his position, self-denial enough to accept its necessities, and wisdom enough to adapt himself to them loyally and without reserve? On the contrary, this, the most critical part, and in fact the turning-point of his career, full of grave lessons and clear-spoken warnings, suggested nothing to that man of little faith but another arch-juggle, which filled up the measure of his misdeeds.

As in all previous cases, the Emperor began by affecting to yield completely and unreservedly to the declared wishes of the nation. Parliamentary government, since such was the country's desire, was precisely what he most approved of and was most eager to carry out. Accordingly a decree was introduced (8th November), sharing with the Corps Legislatif his hitherto jealously guarded initiative. Senators and deputies were made eligible to the Cabinet; each legislative body was to decide upon its own internal regulations, and members of both had the privilege of putting questions to the Ministry. The budget was to be voted by chapters and articles, instead of in lump

* The close supervision exercised over the rural electors may be inferred from a liberal device, which consisted in erasing the official candidate's name from the government voting-papers, which were of a particular form, and writing an opposition name in its place.

† In the new Chamber, the "Right Centre," or constitutional imperialists, numbered one hundred and twenty members, led by Emile Ollivier; the "Left Centre," or moderate liberals, numbered forty-one; and the extreme "Left," twenty-nine members.

sums by state departments ; modifications of the tariff could only be made valid by legislative enactment ; and amendments disapproved by the government were to be pronounced upon in the last appeal by the Chamber.

The chief value of these concessions lay in the additional leverage which they promised to afford to the influence of the representative assembly, and the leading section of the opposition — the *centre droit*, which numbered one hundred and twenty members — hastened to raise itself to the level of the situation. Abolition of the hated law of public safety and of official candidature, suppression of the stamp on newspapers, trial by jury in *délits de presse*, administrative decentralization, and liberty of superior instruction, constituted the programme put forward by this section of the Chamber, and indicate clearly enough the points upon which reform was most loudly demanded. The Emperor accepted this programme at once, and with an ostentation of constitutionalism which produced a marvellous effect for the moment, he actually dismissed his former Cabinet, and summoned “the leader of the opposition,” M. Ollivier himself, to his counsels, giving him *carte blanche* instructions to form a new Ministry. This act created a veritable enthusiasm, not only in France, but still more perhaps in England, whose usually cautious press sang pæans over this imperial conversion, as over the commencement of a new era among their neighbors of peace, prosperity, and Arcadian happiness.

The enthusiasm was short-lived. While the country was waiting impatiently for the reform bill which was to realize the policy of the *centre droit*, for the dissolution which must logically follow it, and for the consequent formal installation of parliamentary government, the Emperor forgot, amid the smiling world around him, the abyss beneath his feet, and turned yearning eyes upon the dazzling prize of personal power which seemed just about to slip from his hands forever. Was it too late, even now, to save this darling possession, with all its fascinations and excitements ? No, a light flashed upon him ; a chance still remained. The Constitution of 1852 had been battered and disfigured indeed, but it still remained unrepealed, and the sixth article of that Constitution ran thus : “The Emperor is responsible to the French people alone, to whom he has at all times the right to appeal.”

Here was clearly the opening to a restoration of the golden age of autocracy. If France had sent up to Paris a legislative body with a troublesome element of opposition in it, that element, after all, was a minority which, with proper management, might be rendered of no effect. Let France *re-elect the Emperor* by a majority of millions, — one of those majorities which, with careful manipulation, can easily be insured, — and the Emperor, like another Antæus, will, by contact with the universal suffrage which gave him birth, recover all his strength, and neutralize in his single person, as directly representing an overwhelming majority of the nation, any section of the Chamber which may oppose his will.

By a fortunate accident the man whose accession to the imperial counsels as “leader of the opposition” had proved such an effective stroke of generalship was precisely the sort of man — fluent, shallow, and vain — to be made the instrument for carrying out this new plot. The pretext, too, a most serviceable pretext, was ready at hand. If the Constitution of 1852 had been established by an appeal to universal suffrage, or a *plebiscitum*, as Napoleon chose to call it in the classical jargon of the first Revolution, that Constitution could, of course, be essentially modified only by the same authority. The logic was irresistible, and M. Emile Ollivier accepted it. But if irresistibly logical, how did such a proceeding agree with constitutional maxims and with common sense? The Chamber just then assembled had been elected by universal suffrage. The *plebiscitum* therefore would, in the last analysis, be simply an appeal to the same authority on its own decision, but now recorded. A confirmation of that decision could not give it additional force, while a reversal of it would discredit universal suffrage as a foundation of stable government altogether. But the real danger which lay in the *plebiscitum* was of a very different kind. Such a vote is really given under constraint. It is a choice between two fixed alternatives, “government or anarchy.” Discussion and qualification are alike excluded. It is the favorite dilemma of the cross-examining lawyer on a point the whole significance of which lies in its surrounding conditions: “I want none of your reasons, sir, no chopping logic here. Give me a straightforward, honest, answer, — yes or no.”

The opposition saw through the scandalous imposture at a glance, and held it up to scorn in terms of glowing indignation. But it was in vain. The majority — a majority made up, it must be remembered, under the old system of official candidature — was relentlessly against them, and the renegade Ministry carried the plebiscitum through the Chamber by one hundred and seventy-one votes against forty-eight. Immediately previous to the appeal to the country, one of those “frightful conspiracies,” in the mounting of which the Paris police have had such large experience, was got up for the occasion, and vigorously advertised. The “Red Republican” spectre, no matter how clumsily imitated, has never lost its terror for the peasant proprietor, and “the Beaury conspiracy” proved a great success. Seven million three hundred thousand ayes, against one million five hundred and fifty thousand noes, ratified the Constitution of 1852, with modifications, and restored to Antæus — as he fondly believed — his pristine giant’s strength. The Corps Legislatif, indeed, was a little more difficult to deal with than of old. But still the great majority made it less troublesome, and M. Emile Ollivier had already settled down into a mere imperial mouth-piece, another Persigny or Rouher, modernized by a thin coating of liberal varnish. Of a dissolution nothing more was said. “We have five years before us,” coolly observed the Prime Minister, “to carry out our programme, — the five years that the legislature has yet to run !”

The triumph was a grand one. It amounted, for all political purposes, to a restoration of personal government, to a pacific repetition of the *coup d'état*. Still, two or three incidents of the plebiscitum had a good deal in them calculated to produce anxiety. The great cities — Paris, Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux — had all voted against it; the proportion of *noes* had been largest in the best educated and most influential departments, smallest in the poorest and least educated;* and, more serious than all the rest, the army, the supposed strong-

* A Paris journal (*Le Temps*) published an elaborate analysis of the vote on the plebiscite vote, showing that in the seventeen best educated departments of France the noes were 26 per cent, while in the twenty-three least educated they were only 11½ per cent.

hold of Napoleon-worship and the most elaborately favored as well as the most vigilantly watched of all sections of the population, had actually given a percentage of negatives larger than that of the agricultural departments; * while in some cases (at Strasburg, for instance) the ominous cry of *Vive la république!* had startled the barracks. This last incident was altogether new and of the gravest significance. The system of conscription in France — drawing yearly some one hundred thousand of the youth of the land into the military service, and returning about the same number of trained soldiers to civil life — has at least the merit of maintaining a constant “solidarity” between the army and the people, and of rendering the employment of the former against the latter, as an instrument of oppression, next to impossible.† It contributes also powerfully, no doubt, to foster that military sentiment which is a national characteristic, and has a marked and decisive influence upon the direction and tone of that sentiment. A disaffected army, therefore, is a serious matter for any government; for a Napoleonic government it was much more than serious. At the same time symptoms became apparent which indicated that the Corps Legislatif, in spite of its official majority, would not prove by any means so tractable as had been anticipated; nay, that there was positive danger of its forcing the Ministry along the path of liberalism much more rapidly than had been contemplated or desired.‡

There was a good deal here that had an ugly look of failure about it, and it was under the influence of the forebodings thereby generated that the Emperor finally resolved upon playing his last card, — a great war, which should reassert France’s military supremacy and restore to the Second Empire that prestige without which the authenticity of its lineage seemed always opened to doubt.

Into the details of that war and its tragic catastrophe, still in process of consummation, we cannot enter here. What we

* Viz. 14½ per cent, or 50,000 noes against 300,000 ayes.

† Louis Napoleon was quite aware of this solidarity, and did his best to counteract it, *by encouraging, among other things, the re-enlistment of soldiers who had completed their term.

‡ The Chamber, for instance, passed a bill, in opposition to the government, enabling the *conseils généraux* to discuss political questions.

have wished to describe has been, the series of mistakes by which Louis Napoleon was led into this, his last great venture, and to set forth the state of things, resulting directly from his political errors, which rendered the collapse of his government inevitable before the first well-directed blow. One of the most sagacious statesmen of our century, in conversation with an English friend, remarked of the French Emperor: "He has no definite policy. He has a number of political ideas floating in his mind, but none of them matured. The only principle, if principle it can be called, which connects together these various ideas is the establishment of his dynasty, and his conviction that the best way to secure it is by feeding the vanity of the French people. It is this uncertain policy, guided by selfish and dynastic considerations, which makes him so dangerous." We believe the accuracy of Count Cavour's estimate to be strictly borne out by all that we have detailed above. Napoleon III., in character and ideas as in fortunes, was simply the result of certain antecedents, and above this level of ideas he never rose. He had intelligence enough to discern that the dazzling military career of Napoleon I. had made upon the national vanity of France an impression far deeper and more general than many much wiser men than himself supposed. And he had wit enough to divine that, with a country in a state of chronic revolution,—a country so profoundly disordered, politically and morally, that, like a fretful invalid, it passed with feverish impatience from one remedy to another, without faith or hope in any,—the turn of the Napoleonic nostrum was sure, sooner or later, to come. In cases of this kind, men of one idea, provided only that idea be the right one, are the successful men, because, ever on the watch, the flood-tide cannot possibly escape them. Twice, Louis Napoleon mistook, with almost ludicrous incapacity, the signs of that tide, and when its swell at last bore him to fortune, little more action was needed on his part than simply to yield to the set of the current and keep himself at the surface. All the rest was done for him.

His grand mistake — a mistake from the trammels of which he was fated never to extricate himself — was to imagine, as his uncle had imagined, that the Napoleonic enthusiasm repre-

sented *the whole* of the national character instead of a side of it only; that France had no nobler aspirations than he himself had. Varied experiences had proved to Louis Napoleon that there were other social forces to work than those upon which his own political theory was built. But, like all men of one idea, he was wholly unable to appreciate the intensity of these forces, and he treated them throughout merely as subordinate disturbing influences, which must be simply humored or cajoled to a certain extent. This narrow and essentially selfish system has failed, as it was inevitable that it should, and its representative has already taken his place in that long line of historic personages, who seem to have lived only in order more forcibly to point an old moral by adorning a new tale. In the sudden eclipse indeed of this man's dazzling splendor there is a depth of tragedy far more solemnly impressive, for us of this nineteenth century, than anything which the ordinary teachings of history can show. Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar vanished from mortal gaze in the very zenith of their glory; but the hand that hurried them away was the hand of the Irresistible, and the lesson conveyed was material rather for the preacher than for the moralist. The fall of the great Napoleon was a gradual one, brought painfully about by external forces concentrated against him, and due, apparently at least, as much to the necessary antagonism of the old order of things as to any inherent weakness in his own creation. Even the sudden and ignominious collapse of the "Monarchy of July" had its explanation in the deficient moral courage of Louis Philippe and his advisers, rather than in the intrinsic defects of the *régime* over which they presided. But the miserable ruin which has overtaken Napoleon III. belongs to an entirely different category from these. Leaving Paris in the morning, surrounded by all the splendid insignia of boundless power, innumerable hosts marshalled at his beck, and awestruck Europe waiting with ready hands to applaud his successes, this man in the evening stands utterly isolated from all that pride, pomp, and circumstance. At the very first reverse, the whole glittering pageant seems literally to fall away from him, as magic jewels and trappings in some fairy tale vanish, at an ill-omened word. France, insensible to fear, pours out

blood and treasure, without stint or reserve, in the unequal conflict. But for him not one sou, not one drop, is devoted ; and when, conscious that the magnificent capital which has grown beneath his hands into a city of palaces has no longer any shelter to give him within its walls, he takes refuge with a pitying foe, the place he leaves vacant is scarcely marked, and France, so sensitive and sympathetic, has no single word of regret for the unwept and unhonored exile.

And now that the Second Empire has worked out its destinies and woven its own shroud, how tempting is the opportunity to speculate on what lies beyond ! The proclamation of a Republic has already awaked lively sympathies here, as it could not but do, and general opinion hails the transformation as an accomplished and *permanent* fact. We wish we could share in this view ; but, looking realities in the face, we find little encouragement to do so. *Nascitur, non fit*, is a proposition fully as applicable to political systems as to poets. Forms of government do not create the special conditions which their proper working supposes, but are themselves developed from those pre-existent conditions. The germ of American republicanism was contained as essentially in the political principles and training which the Pilgrims brought out with them from England, as the oak is contained in the acorn. The oak and the republic are alike results of an evolution from within, modified by the influences acting from without. But where is such a germ to be traced either in France's historic antecedents, in her public life, or in her social tendencies ? The principle of equality is no doubt firmly rooted in the French character. But this principle, although an indispensable element of republicanism, is perfectly reconcilable with the most absolute despotism, as Eastern history notoriously shows. It may furnish the cement to bind the foundation, but possesses, in itself alone, no sustaining power. If we turn to the public life of France, the prospect is still less promising. One of the marked characteristics of members of the Celtic race is an imaginative enthusiasm which predisposes them to grandiose theorizing and visionary speculation, while they turn away with dislike from common-sense realities and practical details. The only corrective to a failing of the kind is an obligatory acquaintance with

these realities and a personal interest in these details. But, unfortunately, the political education of the Frenchman is entirely destitute of this corrective. Administrative centralization exists in France to a degree almost inconceivably minute. Without the authorization of the *préfet* or of one of his subordinates, nothing which has, however remotely, a bearing on general interests, can be done anywhere; and the *préfet* himself can authorize nothing without the license of his chief, the Minister of the Interior, in Paris. If a man wants to put up a steam-engine, he must go first to the *préfet*; if he wishes to build a furnace, the *préfet* prescribes certain conditions, which the structure must fulfil; a bridge over a streamlet, a simple parish road, require the approval of a whole hierarchy of councils, with final reference to the inevitable Minister. Thanks to this system, which directly enhances instead of counteracting the dislike for practical details already referred to, the average Frenchman has a perfect horror of political responsibilities, and avails himself eagerly of every pretext, every opportunity, for evading them, — poor promise for republicanism.

If we look back to historic antecedents, we find nothing to encourage us. The Republic of 1848 was simply an oligarchy. Decree after decree was issued by the party in power with the most reckless indifference to the feelings and rights of others. The President and the Assembly were always at war. The minority uniformly refused to recognize the authority of the majority, and was always ready to appeal against it to arms! The first six months of the Republic was a succession of *émeutes*, and in a short time the country found itself robbed of many of the franchises which a monarchy had secured it, — the press gagged, the right of public meeting smothered, the suffrage mutilated!

The “half-way house” of limited monarchy would be our prediction of France’s next *stable* phase, if we were rash enough to make a prediction, which we are not.

H. W. HOMANS.